

VZCZCXYZ0023
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSG #0348 0591832
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 281832Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1092

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000348

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA, PM

STATE FOR INL, INR/R/MR, NEA/IR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [PTER](#) [IR](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ AND THE ROLE OF IRAN

11. On February 28, business and financial "Diario Financiero" (circ. 30,000) carried a column by Gabriela Mistral University assistant dean Ricardo Riesco, entitled, "Failing in Iraq Would be a Disaster." Quote:

12. "The collapse that characterizes any territorial fragmentation could have very serious consequences for the Middle East.... The imminent fragmentation of Iraq would leave a vacuum for Iran to fill with no counterweight. This would make Iran the great agitator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, pressuring Syria and Jordan and creating maximum tension with Saudi Arabia.... It is difficult to imagine a more explosive scenario.... The U.S. presence in the area will only speed up this process. Worst yet, it will allow radical Islamic groups...to acquire highly sophisticated military training, a graduate degree free of charge...as a result of having to fight a modern and sophisticated army such as the U.S. armed forces. It should not strike us as odd that these highly trained Islamic soldiers will increase the threat of ultra-sophisticated terrorist attacks worldwide. The new U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates proposed to Bush that he increase the number of men in the area to 95,000 in five years as a preventive force. This is a threat to world peace."

KELLY